

Claims 1, 3, 5-17, 19, and 20 are pending in this application, claims 1, 3, 5-17, 19, and 20 having been amended by this present amendment.

In the outstanding Office Action, the abstract was objected to, claims 1, 3, 5-13, 18, and 19 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite, claims 1, 3, 5, 12, 13, 18, and 19 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by *Nakashima et al.*, and claims 6-11 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over *Nakashima*, claims 14-17 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over *Nakashima et al.* in view of *Dominique et al.*, and claim 20 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over *Nakashima et al.* in view of *Matsumoto et al.*

Applicants have amended the specification for clarity. More particularly, on page 68, lines 1-11, the Abstract of the Disclosure was amended to be one paragraph. Applicants respectfully submit that the amendments to the specification do not add new matter. Based on the foregoing, Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the objection to the abstract.

Applicants have canceled claim 18, without prejudice or disclaimer, and have amended claims 1, 3, 5-17, 19, and 20 for clarity. More particularly, Applicants respectfully submit that the terms hard and soft are clearly defined in the specification on page 23, lines 8-9. However, for clarity, Applicants have amended the claims to use the terms "first synthetic resin" and "second synthetic resin" wherein the first synthetic resin is soft and the second synthetic resin is harder than the first synthetic resin.

With respect to the term "concavo-convex," Applicants respectfully submit that this term is fully defined in the specification on page 34, line 24 through page 35, line 19. Further, the term "concavo-convex" is well known in the mechanical arts and one of ordinary skill in the art would understand the term "concavo-covex" to mean comprising undulations

between a concave surface and a convex surface which a serrated surface as shown in Fig. 18 has.

With respect to the term "thin" and "non-thin," Applicants respectfully submit that those terms are fully defined in the specification on page 28, lines 9-12, wherein it states that the non-thin wall portion is at least 1.5 times the thickness of the thin wall portion. However, for clarity, Applicants have changed the term to first and second wall portions throughout the claims, and have also changed the claims to recite that the second wall portion is at least 1.5 time the thickness of the first wall portion.

With respect to claim 5, the phrase "a surface of a periphery of the cover body has a step portion backing to the rear surface of the cover body and facing to the edge of the opening portion of the main body" would be perfectly well understood by one of ordinary skill in the art. However, for clarity, Applicants have changed "backing" to --adjacent-- and have deleted the word "to" after the word "facing."

With respect to the term "can be" in claims 8 and 11, Applicants have changed the term to "is" or "are" as appropriate.

With respect to the phrases "shape of one transversal line" in claims 6-10 and "shape of one longitudinal line" in claims 8, 10, and 11, Applicants have changed the phrases to --shape so as to have one transverse line-- and -- shape so as to have one longitudinal line--, respectively. It is believed that this change corrects the indefiniteness.

With respect to the term "mechanically connected" in claim 13, Applicants respectfully submit that one of ordinary skill in the art would find this term acceptable. However, for clarity, Applicants have deleted the word "mechanically."

As a short synopsis of the applied references, the abstracts of *Nakashima et al.*, *Dominique et al.*, and *Matsumoto et al.* are being repeated, as follows:

*Nakashima et al.* disclose an airbag system which has an instrument panel cover provided with a favorable appearance and enables to protect a passenger sitting on the front passenger seat at an instance of collision. To have such favorable appearance, the cover is combined by mold forming with a lid plate located opposite to an opening of an airbag case as a single unit. The lid plate is arranged having its outer edge decreased in the physical strength. While a main body of a lid plate reinforcement made of a metallic material is joined by thermal bonding to the back side of a region inside the outer edge of the lid plate, a hinge extending outward from the main body is fixedly joined by a bracket to the airbag case so that the hinge, when the airbag element accommodated in the airbag case inflates, can be bent upward to lift or open up the lid plate. Accordingly, the cover when broken out is prevented from generating sharp edges or scattering broken pieces.

*Dominique et al.* disclose an automotive safety airbag installation which includes a padded instrument panel having a U-shaped tearable seam in the panel skin, and a concealed airbag assembly having two hinged lids spaced from the instrument panel internal surface, such that during inflation of the airbag the lids swing outwardly to cause a flap-like section of the panel to deflect upwardly for expansion of the airbag into the passenger compartment. One of the lids closes a gap between the airbag and instrument panel to guide the airbag through the instrument panel and to protect both the airbag and the instrument panel from damage. The padded instrument panel is designed to achieve good shock absorbing action when struck by a human body, in the absence of airbag deployment.

*Matsumoto et al.* disclose an instrument panel having a skin material integrally bonded to the surface of a thermoplastic resin core material. The panel is obtained by feeding the skin material to a cavity between a pair of male and female molds having been designed so as to give a desired instrument panel shape, and press-molding a molten thermoplastic

resin after or while feeding the molten thermoplastic resin to the cavity between the skin material and the male mold or the female mold. Brackets are formed integrally, by press-molding, with the core material resin on opposing end portions and at a back portion of the instrument panel.

None of *Nakashima et al.*, *Dominique et al.*, and *Matsumoto et al.* teach or suggest, what is now recited in amended independent claims 1, 13, 14, 16, and 20.

More particularly, *Nakashima et al.* fails to teach or suggest any overlapping portion or opening portion. The Office Action refers to the structure represented by reference numeral "4" in Fig. 3 as an overlapping portion. However, reference numeral 4 in *Nakashima et al.* is really entitled a lid plate and does not shown any overlapping portions. The Office Action refers to the structure represented by reference character "3a" in Fig. 3 as an opening portion. However, reference character "3a" is an opening in the airbag case of *Nakashima et al.*, and not an opening in the main body (5a) as is being recited in the claim. Based on the foregoing, Applicants respectfully submit that *Nakashima et al.* does not anticipate any of independent claims 1 and 13.

With respect to independent claims 14 and 16 which stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over *Nakashima et al.* in view of *Dominique et al.*, Applicants respectfully submit that it is not understood where in *Nakashima et al.* the Office Action is stating that one of ordinary skill in the art would want to place the deformation restricting portion (reference numeral 36 in Fig. 1) of *Dominique et al.* Further, Applicants respectfully submit that if *Nakashima et al.* and *Dominique et al.* are not combinable because if *Nakashima et al.* were modified by the deformation restricting portion (reference numeral 36 in Fig. 1) of *Dominique et al.*, the passenger-side airbag system of *Nakashima et al.* would not work for its intended purpose.

With respect to independent method claim 20 which stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over *Nakashima et al.* in view of *Matsumoto et al.*, Applicants respectfully submit that the Office Action's statement with respect to the steps of interrupting a portion, forming a communicating portion, and forming an overlapping portion being steps that would be inherent in a combination of *Nakashima et al.* and *Matsumoto et al.* is incorrect for the following reasons. The thermoplastic resin core of *Matsumoto et al.* forms a part of the final product and is in no way similar to Applicant's core (61) which is part of the mold. Therefore, not only would it not be inherent to interrupt a portion between a first cavity portion and a second cavity portion of *Matsumoto et al.*, but *Matsumoto et al.* does not show and would not require such a step. Since the step of interrupting cannot be shown and is not disclosed in *Matsumoto et al.*, the step of forming a communicating portion is not shown and cannot be shown by *Matsumoto et al.* as there would be no core of the mold to be retreated. Likewise, *Matsumoto et al.* nowhere discloses and does not require any overlapping portion or portions and therefore, would not teach the steps recited at lines 13-15 of claim 20.

Applicants respectfully submit that the amendments to claims 1, 3, 5-17, 19, and 20 do not add new matter. Applicants also respectfully submit that amended claims 3, 5-12, and 19 are either directly or indirectly dependent upon amended independent claim 1 so that arguments serving to patentably distinguish amended independent claim 1 from the prior art of record are available, among others, to patentably distinguish amended claims 3, 5-12, and 19. Applicants also respectfully submit that amended claim 15 is directly dependent upon amended independent claim 14 so that arguments serving to patentably distinguish amended independent claim 14 from the prior art of record are available, among others, to patentably distinguish amended claim 15. Applicants also respectfully submit that amended claim 17 is directly dependent upon amended independent claim 16 so that arguments serving to

patentably distinguish amended independent claim 16 from the prior art of record are available, among others, to patentably distinguish amended claim 17. Based on the foregoing, Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the rejection of the claims under 35 U.S.C. §§ 112, second paragraph, 102(e), and 103(a), and allowance of amended claims 1, 3, 5-17, 19, and 20.

In view of the present amendment, amended claims 1, 3, 5-17, 19, and 20 are believed to be in condition for allowance, and an early and favorable action to that effect is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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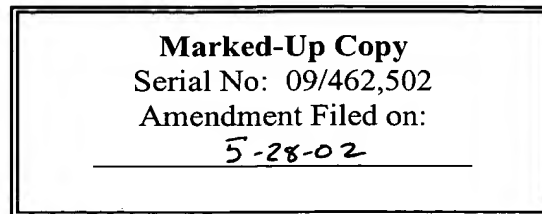
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**IN THE SPECIFICATION:**

Please amend the specification, as follows:

Page 68, lines 1-11, please amend the abstract, as follows:

[ABSTRACT

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--ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE--

A panel for an airbag of an automobile formed by integrally molding a cover body,  
which is made of a synthetic resin, with a main body made of another synthetic resin[, the].

The panel [comprising:

] includes a joint portion joined with the cover body provided around an opening  
portion formed in the main body[,

wherein the]. The joint portion constitutes an overlapping portion in which an outer  
peripheral edge of the cover body is overlapped as being arranged on the inner side of an  
opening edge of the main body.

**IN THE CLAIMS:**

Please cancel claim 18, without prejudice or disclaimer, and amend claims 1, 3, 5-17,  
19, and 20, as follows:

1. (Twice Amended) A panel for an airbag of an automobile formed by integrally  
two-color molding a cover body made of a [soft] first synthetic resin with a main body made

of [another hard] a second synthetic resin which is harder than said first synthetic resin material, the panel comprising:

a joint portion joined with the cover body provided around an opening portion formed in the main body,

wherein the joint portion constitutes an overlapping portion in which an outer peripheral edge of the cover body is overlapped as being arranged on the inner side of an opening edge of the main body and the overlapping portion is welded together in two-color molding the main body with the cover body.

3. (Amended) The panel for an airbag according to claim 1, wherein a concavo-convex portion having a serrate shape or a [downward] downwardly convex shape is formed on a lower face of the main body in the overlapping portion.

5. (Twice Amended) The panel for an airbag according to claim 1, wherein a surface of a periphery of the cover body has a step portion [backing] adjacent to the rear surface of the cover body and facing [to] the edge of the opening portion of the main body, thereby, a groove portion having a closed curve shape is formed in a boundary portion of an end portion of the opening portion of the main body in the cover body, and a [thin] first wall portion which is thin and which ruptures and a [non-thin] second wall portion which is at least 1.5 times as thick as the first wall portion and which does not rupture at an operating time of the airbag are formed along the groove portion in the cover body in a single line shape or a shape of plural continuous lines.

6. (Amended) The panel for an airbag according to claim 5, wherein the [non-thin] second wall portion is formed into a shape [of] so as to have one [transversal] transverse line on an upper or lower side of the cover body, and the [thin] first wall portion is formed in a



quadrilateral shape with one side opened along [a] ~~the~~ groove portion in three directions except for the transverse line forming the non-thin wall portion.

7. (Amended) The panel for an airbag according to claim 5, wherein the [non-thin] second wall portion is formed into a shape [of] so as to have one [transversal] transverse line on an upper or lower side of the cover body and the [thin] first wall portion is formed along an entire periphery of the groove portion such that a line forming the [non-thin] second wall portion is included in an inner side.

8. (Amended) The panel for an airbag according to claim 5, wherein the [non-thin] second wall portion can be formed into a shape [of] so as to have one [transversal] transverse line on each of upper and lower sides of the cover body, and the [thin] first wall portion is formed into a shape [of] so as to have one longitudinal line on each of left-hand and right-hand sides of the cover body;

wherein a [second thin] third wall portion which is thin and which is not formed along [a] ~~the~~ groove portion is formed into a shape [of] so as to have one [transversal] transverse line in a central portion of the cover body; and

wherein [the entire of] the first and [second thin] third wall portions [can be] are formed [in] into an H-shape.

9. (Amended) The panel according for an airbag to claim 5, wherein the [non-thin] second wall portion is formed into a shape [of] so as to have one [transversal] transverse line on each of upper and lower sides of the cover body, and the [thin] first wall portion is formed along an entire periphery of [a] ~~the~~ groove portion such that a line forming the [non-thin] second wall portion is included in an inner side;

wherein a [second thin] third wall portion which is thin and which is not formed along the groove portion is formed into a shape [of] so as to have one [transversal] transverse line in a central portion of the cover body; and

wherein [the entire of] the first and [second thin] third wall portions [is] are formed [in] into a shape in which two quadrilaterals are lined up.

10. (Amended) The panel for an airbag according to claim 5,

wherein the [non-thin] second wall portion [can be] is formed into a shape [of] so as to have one longitudinal line on each of left-hand and right-hand sides of the cover body, and the [thin] first wall portion is formed into a shape [of] so as to have one [transversal] transverse line on each of upper and lower sides of the cover body;

wherein a [second thin] third wall portion which is thin and which is not formed along [a] the groove portion is formed into a shape [of] so as to have one longitudinal line in a central portion of the cover; and

wherein [the entire of] the first and [second thin] third wall portions [is] are formed [in] into an H-shape.

11. (Amended) The panel for an airbag according to claim 5,

wherein the [non-thin] second wall portion [can be] is formed into a shape [of] so as to have one longitudinal line on each of left-hand and right-hand sides of the cover body, and the [thin] first wall portion is formed along an entire periphery of [a] the groove portion such that a line forming the [non-thin] second portion is included with an inner side;

wherein a [second thin] third wall portion is not formed along the groove portion but is formed into a shape [of] so as to have one longitudinal line in a central portion of the cover body; and

wherein [the entire of] the first and [second thin] ~~third~~ wall portions [is] ~~are~~ formed [in] into a shape in which two quadrilaterals are lined up.

12. (Amended) The panel for an airbag according to claim 5, [wherein] ~~further comprising~~ a rib [is projected in] ~~projecting into~~ the [non-thin] ~~second~~ wall portion and connected to the airbag case through a connecting member.

13. (Twice Amended) A panel for an airbag of an automobile formed by integrally molding a cover body made of a ~~first~~ synthetic resin ~~which is soft~~ with a main body made of [another] ~~a second~~ synthetic resin ~~which is harder than the first synthetic resin~~, the panel comprising:

a joint portion joined with the cover body provided around an opening portion formed in the main body,

wherein the joint portion constitutes an overlapping portion in which an outer peripheral edge of the cover body is overlapped as being arranged on the inner side of an opening edge of the main body, and the opening edge of the opening portion of the main body is [mechanically] connected to the outer peripheral edge of the cover body.

14. (Amended) A panel for an airbag of an automobile [including] ~~comprising~~:  
a cover body [comprising] ~~made of~~ a first synthetic resin material ~~which is soft~~;  
a main body [comprising] ~~made of~~ a second synthetic resin material ~~which is harder than the first synthetic resin material and which is compatible with the first synthetic resin material, the main body being~~ formed by two-color molding after forming the cover body;  
and

a deformation restricting portion provided at the outer peripheral edge of the cover body ~~and engaged with a mold face~~,

wherein the main body [comprises] ~~includes~~ an opening portion which is closed by the cover body; and

wherein the deformation restricting portion restricts deformation of the cover body caused by a molding pressure which acts at a molding time of the main body.

15. (Amended) The panel for an airbag according to claim 14, wherein the deformation restricting portion is constituted of a convex strip having ~~either~~ an angular cross section or a concave groove.

16. (Amended) A panel for an airbag of an automobile [including] comprising:  
a main body [which has] having an opening portion[ comprising], the main body being made of a first synthetic resin material;

a cover body [comprising] made of a second synthetic resin material which is harder than the first synthetic resin material and which is compatible with the first synthetic resin material, the cover body being formed by two-color molding after forming the main body;  
and

a deformation restricting portion provided at the periphery of the opening portion and engaged with a mold face,

wherein the opening portion of the main body [comprises] is closed by the cover body; and

wherein the deformation restricting portion restricts deformation of the cover body caused by a molding pressure which acts at a molding time of the main body.

17. (Amended) The panel for an airbag according to claim 16, wherein the deformation restricting portion is a convex strip having ~~either~~ an angular cross section or a concave groove.

18. (Canceled).

19. (Amended) The panel for an airbag according to claim 5, further comprising:  
[wherein ]a rib [is projected in] projecting into the cover body on the rear face of a portion in which no [thin] first wall portion is formed; and  
[wherein ]a connecting member ~~is made of a metal~~[ and extending], extends from a side of the main body, and is connected to the rib[,]; and  
a projection [is] formed on a surface of [this] ~~the~~ connecting member[ and is bitten], the projection biting into a surface of the rib when the connecting member is connected to the rib.

20. (Amended) A method for producing a panel for an airbag of an automobile formed by integrally molding a cover body made of a first synthetic resin which is soft with a main body made of [another] a second synthetic resin which is harder than the first synthetic resin, the method comprising:

preparing a thermoplastic material having compatibility [as] with each of the first synthetic resin and second synthetic resin forming each of the main body and the cover body, respectively;

arranging a movable core in a male or a female die as a mold;

interrupting a portion between a first cavity portion for forming a first member and a second cavity portion for forming a second member by allowing the core to project and contact an opposite one of the male or female die;

injecting a material of the first member into the first cavity portion;

forming a communicating portion between the first and second cavity portions by retreating the core; and

injecting a material of the second member into the second cavity portion and the communicating portion so that an overlapping portion of both the first and second members is formed and adhered and both the first and second members are integrally made.